Table of Contents

1. Prologue
2. Chapter 1
3. Chapter 2

Prologue

Prologue

A brown she-cat purred as she licked her newborn kit's head. A black tom meowed a greeting and stepped into the nursery. "Have you named our kits yet?" the tom asked.

"This one is Smallkit," she replied, pointing with her tail to a small she-cat with the same color of fur as her father.

"This is Tallkit," she continued, gesturing to a black and white tom with an unusually long tail.

"And this one…I haven't named him yet," the she-cat admitted. "Could you help me name him, Strongfoot?"

Strongfoot nodded. "I think we should name him Hawkkit," he meowed.

"Hawkkit," the she-cat murmured. "He will be named Hawkkit."

Strongfoot stepped forward and sniffed each of the kits' heads. "My precious kits," he whispered. "Make me and my Clan proud."

Hawkkit gave a high-pitched mew and start wriggling around. Strongfoot let out a fond *mrrow* of amusement. "Good-bye, kits. I will be back soon," he promised.

Little did any cat know that Strongfoot would never see his kits again.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1

Hawkkit opened his eyes inside the nursery. A brown she-cat's slender body was curled around his own tiny body, and two other small kits' bodies. His belly ached from hunger, and he gave a loud, pitiful mew. The brown she-cat opened her eyes. "I'm sorry, my dear Hawkkit," she murmured. "I don't have any milk. You'll have to wait until a hunting patrol returns with fresh-kill."

Hawkkit started wailing loudly. His belly rumbled and he was starting to grow tired. His loud cries faded into quiet whimpers. "Hush, Hawkkit," the brown she-cat muttered, turning her head to look at him.

Suddenly, her eyes widened in shock and she gasped in surprise. "Your eyes are already open?" she stammered.

Then, after recovering from her shock, she said, "Go to sleep. I'll wake you up when the hunting patrol has come back with fresh-kill."

Hawkkit was so tired that he couldn't keep his eyes open, but he couldn't fall asleep due to the sharp pangs of hunger in his belly. He opened his mouth and uttered his first words, "Want… food."

By now, the other kits were awake. They were mewling pitifully too now. "It's leaf-bare," the she-cat told her kits. "There's not enough prey for any cat."

But the other kits eyes weren't open yet. Hawkkit felt proud that his eyes were already open even though his siblings' were not. But his thoughts were clouded by drowsiness.

Suddenly, a cat with an awkward gait that was almost as big as his mother entered the den and dropped a scrawny shrew

onto the ground. “That’s all the prey you could find, Deadpaw?” she asked.

Deadpaw nodded. “All the prey is hiding in their burrows,” he said.

Hawkkit’s mother looked worried. “Hopefully the prey returns soon,” she murmured as Deadpaw left the nursery.

Soon, Hawkkit was nestled against his mother’s belly. He was still slightly hungry, but the small amount of milk had taken the edge off of his hunger. Closing his eyes, he sank into the world of sleep.

***

Hawkkit woke up after a short amount of sleep to a cat darting into the den. His mother opened her eyes sleepily. “What is it, Reedfeather?” she asked.

Reedfeather looked worried. “It’s Strongfoot. We haven’t seen him since sunrise, and some cat has to appoint the night patrols if the deputy isn’t here,” he meowed. “Do you know where Strongfoot is, Amberfur?”

Hawkkit’s mother shook her head. “I haven’t seen him since he visited the kits last night,” Amberfur replied.

“We’ll send out a search patrol right now,” Reedfeather meowed.

***

Hawkkit was sleeping again when a loud, grief-stricken yowl came from Amberfur. She darted outside and Hawkkit followed her. The ground was covered with a white, powdery substance that rose up to Hawkkit’s shoulders. An orange ball of flame rose into the sky, and the horizon was tinted pink. Pale sunlight shed light on the camp and the unmoving body of a massive black tom. Long, wide clawmarks ran down his throat and his head hung at an awkward angle.

“Strongfoot!” Amberfur wailed.

Heatherstar, the Clan leader, walked up to Amberfur with her head bowed with grief. “He was a good deputy, and he served me well,” she murmured quietly to Amberfur.

Amberfur said nothing, but merely dipped her head to her leader and trotted back into the nursery.

***

It was sundown when a loud yowl came from the TallRock. “Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey join beneath the TallRock for a Clan meeting!” Heatherstar yowled.

Hawkkit’s littermates didn’t stir. Amberfur lifted her head, but didn’t leave the nursery. Hawkkit trotted outside. *My mother may not want to hear what Heatherstar has to say, but I do!* Hawkkit thought.

Heatherstar’s gaze swept across the camp until she focused in on one cat. “I say these words before StarClan, and the spirit of Strongfoot, that they may hear and approve of my choice,” Heatherstar meowed. “Reedfeather will be the new deputy.”

As the Clan began to chant Reedfeather’s name, Hawkkit felt a burst of excitement. *One day, that will be me who is deputy!*

Chapter 2

Chapter 2

The next morning, Hawkkit decided he wanted to explore the camp. “Amberfur!” he whispered. “Can I go outside and explore the camp?”

Amberfur looked up. Her blue eyes were clouded with sadness. “Fine,” she murmured quietly, as if she didn’t care at all.

Hawkkit trotted outside and peered inside a den next to the nursery that was along the gorse wall surrounding the camp. Two elderly cats were sharing tongues inside the den. One of the cats noticed Hawkkit and whispered something into the other cat’s ear. They both turned to face him. “You’re one of Amberfur’s kits right?” the elderly golden she-cat asked.

Hawkkit nodded. “My name is Hawkkit,” he meowed. “What’s your name?”

“I am Goldenberry and my denmate is Brownpelt,” she replied.

“Is this where the warriors sleep?” Hawkkit asked.

Goldenberry chuckled softly. “No, little one,” she replied. “The warriors, apprentices, and our Clan leader prefer to sleep outside.”

Hawkkit hesitated for a moment. “Well then, I am going to sleep outside tonight!” he declared.

Goldenberry shook her head. “No cat sleeps outside when it is snowy like this!” she meowed.

Hawkkit started to ask another question, but it was interrupted by a yawn. “Go back to the nursery, Hawkkit,” Brownpelt meowed, speaking to Hawkkit for the first time. “When

you have rested you can come back again."

Hawkkit started to protest, but he was cut off by yet another yawn. "Go," Goldenberry meowed gently. "Even warriors need to sleep sometimes."

Hawkkit sighed and started to walk back towards the nursery. Behind him, Goldenberry yowled, "Come back soon!"

Hawkkit padded into the nursery and laid down beside his mother. He quickly drifted into the world of sleep.